

Report on the Agrarian Question

April 28 (May 11)
Newspaper Report

Comrade Lenin pointed to the landed estates, and the incredible jumble of arable fields brought about by the haphazard administration on the peasant land, first of the bailiffs, then of the 1861 magistrates and finally of the Stolypin officials,^{[\[1\]](#)} as the principal cause of the enslaving feudal relations remaining in the countryside.

Hence, the natural desire on the part of the peasants to “clear the land”, to have *all* the land re-allotted, a desire which is expressed in the saying that “all the land is God’s”. The peasant-holder cannot be reconciled with the obstacles which, in the new conditions of capitalist trade, he finds intolerable. That is proved by the bill submitted by the 104 peasant deputies in the First and Second Dumas.^{[\[2\]](#)}

The Socialist-Revolutionaries have themselves admitted that in that Bill the “petty-economy ideology” prevails over the “principles of equalisation”. The peasant wants to own his land, but wants it allotted in accordance with the new demands of the commodity economy. Even where some peasants appear to accept the principle of egalitarian land tenure, their view of it is different from that of the S.R. intellectuals. The statistical result of the distribution of the landowner and peasant holdings in Russia comes to the following figures: 300 peasant families hold 2,000 dessiatines, and *one* landowner holds *as much*. Their demand for “equalisation” clearly contains the idea of equalising the rights of the 300 and the one.

The necessity of land nationalisation, as a fully bourgeois and highly progressive measure, has been prepared by the preceding development of the land economy in Russia and the development of the world market. The war has sharpened every contradiction. Just now, the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants is a demand powerfully dictated by the needs of wartime. Shingaryov & Co. actually intensify the crisis by inviting the peasants to *wait* for a Constituent Assembly (whereas the sowing must be done *right away*), thereby threatening to turn the grain shortage into a real famine. They are trying to force on the peasants a bourgeois-bureaucratic solution of the agrarian question. Meanwhile, there is no

time to wait for the legalisation of landownership, because the crisis is approaching in gigantic strides. The peasants have already displayed a revolutionary initiative—in Penza Gubernia they have been taking over the landowners' live and dead stock for common use. It goes without saying that our Party stands only for the *organised* take-over of lands and implements because that is necessary for *increasing* production, while any damage to implements inflicts harm above all on the peasants and workers themselves.

On the other hand, we stand for the separate organisation of agricultural workers.

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Notes

[1] *Magistrates*—an administrative office introduced by the tsarist government during the Peasant Reform in 1861. They were appointed from the local gentry and were empowered to decide disputes between landowners and peasants arising from the Reform. They confirmed officials elected from among the peasants and the decisions of peasants' meetings; they also had powers to inflict punishment (arrest, fine) on peasants.

Stolypin, P. A.—Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Minister for the Interior in tsarist Russia from 1906 to 1914. His name is connected with a period of fierce political reaction. He issued a number of agrarian laws designed to create strong kulak farms in the countryside as a social bulwark for the tsarist autocracy. p. 425

[2] *The Agrarian Programme of the 104*—the agrarian bill signed by 104 members of the First Duma and tabled by the Trudoviks at the thirteenth sitting on May 23 (June 5), 1906. The bill said the aim of agrarian legislation was "to strive to establish an order under which all land with its minerals and waters would belong to the whole people, with the land required for agriculture being given for use only to those who would cultivate it by their labour" (*Gosudarstvennaya дума в России в документах и материалах* [The State Duma in Russia in Documents and Materials], Moscow, 1957, p. 172). The Trudoviks demanded the establishment of a "nation-wide land fund" which was to include, all the state, crown, cabinet, monastery and church lands; there was also to be a forcible alienation into the fund of landed estates and other privately owned lands where the size of possessions was in excess of the labour norm established, for the given area. Some compensation was to be paid for the alienated privately owned lands. Allotments and small privately owned tracts were to be retained by their owners for some time; the bill provided for a subsequent gradual transfer of these lands as well to the nation-wide fund. The agrarian reform was to be carried out by local committees elected by universal, direct and equal suffrage with secret ballot. p. 425

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